

Bread and Salt

Kabbalah teaches that some aspects of divine sustenance are granted independently of our merits.

From the teachings of Rabbi Yitzchak Luria; translated and edited by Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky



Kabbalah teaches that some aspects of divine sustenance are granted independently of our merits.

The following is a continuation of the first installment, [Like the Dew of Mount Hermon](#), which we suggest the reader review before proceeding. In short, we learned that there are two *maza*'s (channels of divine flow) in the beard of *Arich Anpin*, the eighth and the thirteenth. Relative to each other, these *maza*'s are masculine and feminine, respectively. Isaac directed his prayers to G-d via the 13th, female rectification, in order to draw divine beneficence to his wife Rebecca, while Rebecca directed her prayers to G-d via the 8th, male rectification, in order to draw divine beneficence to her husband, Isaac.

An alternative explanation of this phenomenon is as follows:

The word for "opposite" [in Hebrew, "*nochach*", in the verse "Isaac entreated G-d *opposite* his wife, because she was barren" (Gen. 25:21)] **is written without a vav** [to indicate the "o" vowel], **and thus its numerical value is the same as that as the word "*maza*"** [plus the *kolel*].

"*Nochach*" is spelled: *nun-kaf-chet* = 50 + 20 + 8 = 78.

"*Maza*" is spelled: *mem-zayin-lamed* = 40 + 7 + 30 = 77.

This indicates that Isaac directed his prayers [to G-d] **via the thirteenth *maza*, from which his wife needed to receive** [divine beneficence in order to conceive].

Isaac directed his prayers to G-d via the thirteenth *maza*....

The Torah uses the verb "he entreated" [instead of "he prayed"] **because the letters of its root can be permuted to form the Aramaic word for "hair".**

The word for "he entreated" is "*vayetar*", which is spelled *vav-yud-ayin-tav-reish*. The verbal root of this word is *ayin-tav-reish*; when these letters are rearranged as *tav-ayin-reish*, they form the root of the Aramaic word for "hair", "*taara*" (spelled *tav-ayin-reish-alef*). Beard hair, we have seen, is the metaphor used to describe the

divine energy that issues from *Arich Anpin* when its intellect descends into its emotions.

This "hair" refers to the name *Ado-nai* spelled out, the numerical value of which is the same as that of this word.

"*Ado-nai*" spelled out is *alef-lamed-pei dalet-lamed-tav nun-vav-nun yud-vav-dalet*. The numerical value of this is:

$$(1 + 30 + 80) + (4 + 30 + 400) + (50 + 6 + 50) + (10 + 6 + 4) = 111 + 434 + 106 + 20 = 671.$$

"*Taara*" is spelled: *tav-ayin-reish-alef* = $400 + 70 + 200 + 1 = 671$.

This refers to the *mazal* of "And He Acquits".

The *mazal* "and He acquits" is the 13th of the 13 Rectifications of the Beard of *Arich Anpin*, as we have seen. This is the feminine *mazal*, and is therefore associated with the name *Ado-nai*, which is associated with *malchut* or the *partzuf* of *Nukva*, the feminine principle.

The *alef* is missing from the word for "and he entreated" because it is split into two, forming two sets of the letters *vav-yud*, one present in [the 8th *mazal*] "Storing", and one present in [the 13th *mazal*,] "And He Acquits".

The letter *alef* can be seen as formed by a diagonal *vav*, or straight line, together with two small *yud*'s connected to it above and below it. If we further envision the middle, diagonal line splitting into two parallel lines, the *alef* splits symmetrically along its diagonal into an upper *yud-vav* and a lower *yud-vav*. The *alef* of *taara* is thus replaced by one *yud-vav* pair, and we thus have all the letters that spell

"*vayetar*" ("and he entreated"): *vav-yud-ayin-tav-reish*. We have said that Isaac was praying via the 13th *mazal*; we now see how the verb describing his act of prayer thus alludes to this.

The three names *Havayah*...indicate the divine consciousness of the three *sefirot* of the mind....

This is the mystical meaning of the word "and he entreated", which refers to the *mazal* of "And He Acquits", via which Isaac prayed, as I explained.

Now, there are twelve letters in the spelling-out of the name *Ado-nai*, which is associated with the *mazal* of "And He Acquits" [as we have stated]. These correlate to the twelve [letters] that the *mazal* of "Storing" comprises, as we have seen.

The twelve letters that the *mazal* of "Storing" comprises are the twelve letters in the three names *Havayah*

that indicate the divine consciousness of the three *sefirot* of the mind, which manifest as the beard when the intellect descends into the emotions.

Therefore, Rebecca was worthy of giving birth to twelve tribes, but because she said, "what is this [in Hebrew, 'zeh'] for me?" (*ibid.* 25:22) because of the pain of her pregnancy, and also because Esau destroyed her womb, her son Jacob was privileged to father the twelve tribes [instead of her].

The numerical value of the word for "this" ("zeh", spelled *zayin-hei*) is 12. So Rebecca's statement can mean, "What do I need the twelve for"?

With the above in mind, we can understand the Sages' injunction "Eat bread with salt" (*Avot* 6:4). This statement alludes these two *mazal*'s. The [usual] word for "bread" is "*lechem*", whose numerical value is the same as that of the three names *Havayah* [that comprise the masculine *mazal* "Storing" and] whose numerical value is that of the Aramaic word for "*mazal*" [used in the Sages' statement regarding "*mazal*".]

Although the word for bread used in the Sages' statement about eating bread with salt is "*pat*", the more common word for bread is "*lechem*".

"*Lechem*" is spelled: *lamed-chet-mem* = 30 + 8 + 40 = 78.

The numerical value of the name *Havayah* is 26. 3 x 26 = 78.

The Aramaic for "*mazal*", "*mazla*", is spelled *mem-zayin-lamed-alef* = 40 + 7 + 30 + 1 = 78.

The divine energy in the beard hairs derives from the intellect....

As we said previously, the divine energy in the beard hairs derives from the intellect, which comprises three *sefirot* whose divine energy is channeled via three names *Havayah*.

"Bread" is the general metaphor for food and material sustenance. The Sages state that there are three things in life that are dependent upon *mazal*: children, health and longevity, and sustenance. (*Moed Katan* 28a) This statement is in Aramaic, so the word used for "*mazal*" in it is its Aramaic equivalent, "*mazla*".

The word for "salt" ["*melach*"] alludes also to the three names *Havayah* that comprise the 12 letters present in the [feminine] *mazal* of "And He Acquits".

The word for "salt", "*melach*", is a permutation of the word for "bread", "*lechem*". Its numerical value is therefore also 78.

The union of these two *mazal*'s draws down sustenance.

Sustenance is the "offspring" of the union of the male and female *maza*'s.

[The Sages' statement continues:] **"...and drink water with measure." Water refers to the states of *chesed*, which extend [of themselves] without limit. But "the black candle", i.e. the five states of *gevura*, limits them.**

Water refers to the states of *chesed*, which extend without limit....

"The black candle" (in Aramaic, "*butzina dekardanuta*") is a Zoharic metaphor for the five states of *gevura*.

They thus said, "drink water with measure," as in the verse "[Do no injustice in judgment, neither] with length, with weights, nor with liquid measure." (Lev. 19:35)

The Hebrew word for "liquid measure", "*mesura*", is the same as that for "measure" in the Sages' statement about drinking water in measure. The meaning is that *chesed* must be tempered with *gevura* in order for its goodness to act effectively in the world.

But bread, which is one of the three things [dependent upon *maza*] - i.e. children, health, and sustenance - is not dependent upon one's merit, which is an expression of the states of *gevura*.

Gevura is the principle of limitation, i.e. the evaluation of whether or not the recipient is worthy of receiving the beneficence of *chesed*, and to what degree. Thus, the Sages' statement can be seen as a contrast between bread and water. Water is apportioned "in measure", i.e. in accordance with the recipients worth and merits. Bread, however, is not.

This is because the numerical value of the word for merit ["*zechut*"] is twice that of "*gevura*", plus the *kolel*.

The word "*zechut*" is spelled: *zayin-kaf-vav-tav* = 7 + 20 + 6 + 400 = 433.

"*Gevura*" is spelled: *gimel-beit-vav-reish-hei* = 3 + 2 + 6 + 200 + 5 = 216. 2 x 216 = 432.

These three things [children, health, and sustenance] are needed greatly by the world. They are therefore not dependent on [their recipients'] merits but on the *mazals*, i.e. the two *mazals* we have mentioned.

The Sages listed [these three things] in the order they did [children, health, and sustenance] because children are associated with *daat*, which extends down through the spinal cord, health issues from *Imma*, for life, i.e. intellect, issues from there, and sustenance issues from *Abba*. They thus listed them

The constant flow of new understanding keeps life from getting boring....

in ascending order.

Marital relations are carnal "knowledge" (*daat*) as in the verse, "And Adam *knew* his wife, Eve."

Intellect is the life-force that enlivens reality. People act with enthusiasm and vitality when they understand the value and purpose of what they are doing, and the constant flow of new understanding keeps life from getting boring. Indeed, the zest for life that accompanies intellect is probably a major factor in health and longevity.

Sustenance issues from *Abba*, for selflessness (*bitul*), the experience of *chochma*, is the prerequisite for success in worldly endeavors. In order to receive the divine blessing of success in pursuit of a livelihood, we must dedicate our efforts to G-d's purpose is making the world into His home and conducting our affairs in accordance with His will, i.e. following the Torah's laws and intentions.

These three are dependent upon the coupling of these two *maza*'s, for the world depends upon them. Were they to be dependent upon [our merit, as expressed in] the states of *gevura*, the world would be lost. Other aspects of life, however, which are not so essential, *are* dependent upon our merit.

Thus, even if our merit is insufficient, we can still pray to G-d for these three essentials, relying upon His mercy to override our lack of merits.

Translated and adapted by Moshe-Yaakov Wisnefsky from *Likutei Torah* and *Sefer HaLikutim*; subsequently published in "Apples From the Orchard."

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FROM THE TEACHINGS OF RABBI YITZCHAK LURIA; TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY MOSHE YAAKOV WISNEFSKY

Rabbi Yitzchak Luria [...Ashkenazi ben Shlomo] (5294-5332 = 1534-1572 c.e.); Yahrtzeit (anniversary of death): 5th of Av. Buried in the Old Cemetery of Tzfat. Commonly known as the *Ari*, an acronym standing for *Eloki* Rabbi Yitzchak, the G-dly Rabbi Isaac. No other master or sage ever had this extra letter *Aleph*, standing for *Eloki* [G-dly], prefaced to his name. This was a sign of what his contemporaries thought of him. Later generations, fearful that this appellation might be misunderstood, said that this *Aleph* stood for Ashkenazi, indicating that his family had originated in Germany, as indeed it had. But the original meaning is the correct one, and to this day among Kabbalists, Rabbi Yitzchak Luria is only referred to as Rabbenu HaAri, HaAri HaKadosh [the holy Ari] or Arizal [the Ari of blessed memory].

Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky is a scholar, writer, editor and anthologist living in Jerusalem. He is a co-founder of Ascent Institute of Safed and one of the first contributing writers for KabbalaOnline.org. He has recently produced two monumental works: "[Apples from the Orchard: Arizal on the Weekly Torah](#)" (available for purchase from KabbalaOnline [here](#)) and a

Chumash translation with commentary based on the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe (Kehot).

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